
Sudan: Peace Agreement Around the Corner?

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We have been supportive of the Sudan peace talks because we wanted to advance U.S. interests to promote human rights, counter-terrorism, and regional stability. From the outset of these negotiations we have made clear that our policy is based on three pillars, all of which must be achieved in order to begin the process of normalization of relations with the government of Sudan. These are: achievement of a just and comprehensive peace settlement; unrestricted humanitarian access and respect for human rights in all areas; and full cooperation against terrorism. I would also like to address our shared concerns about the conflict and humanitarian crisis in Darfur in western Sudan.

The road to peace in Sudan has been long and hard. With the support of the Congress, we have made substantial progress. The framework on security issues and accord on wealth sharing are major accomplishments that have given the process momentum. The parties are close to a final peace agreement, but the issue of Abyei poses a large challenge and significant power-sharing issues remain to be resolved. Over the last year, international monitors, funded and supported by the United States, confirm that there has been a measure of peace in much of the south unprecedented in recent decades. People have begun to live rather than simply trying to survive. Tens of thousands of displaced persons have returned to their homes in the Nuba Mountains as a result of the cease fire there brokered by the United States and Switzerland.

Implementation of any peace agreement reached between the parties will pose major challenges. U.S. leadership will be essential to mobilize international support for next steps including international monitoring in close cooperation with the United Nations, assistance for reconstruction and development, and continuation of critical humanitarian assistance programs.

Achieving peace in Sudan is one of the Administration's highest priorities in Africa. Accomplishing this requires a set of comprehensive accords that address the legitimate grievances of southerners while establishing a national democratic framework leading to fundamental change. As we near the April 21, 2004 determination on the *Sudan Peace Act*, I would like to update the Committee on the current state of play in the negotiations between the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement and the Sudanese government. First I would like to take this opportunity to commend the efforts of the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) for its leadership of the peace process. I want particularly to express our appreciation for the tireless, dedicated mediation by General Lazaro Sumbeiywo.

Our objective is to achieve a Framework on the Outstanding Issues by the end of the current round of negotiations March 16, 2004. Since the current round began February 17, 2004 the parties have been engaged in difficult discussions regarding the three marginalized areas:

- The Nuba Mountains,
- Southern Blue Nile, and;
- Abyei.

They have resolved most of the issues related to the Nuba Mountains and Southern Blue Nile, and both sides believe that the remaining questions on those two areas will be satisfactorily addressed. Abyei poses a larger challenge. The central issue is whether the traditional Ngoc

Dinka inhabitants of Abyei will be allowed to determine their political future. The Sudanese government continues to resist a commitment to popular consultation for the Ngoc Dinka and has expressed concerns about the impact a solution in Abyei could have on northern stability. The United States has made clear its position that such popular consultation is necessary, and we have been working with the parties to urge resolution of this issue. Our Troika partners, the United Kingdom and Norway, and we have all explored creative ideas with the two sides, but, so far, they frankly remain unable to resolve the Abyei issue. The two sides have also discussed the nature of a possible political partnership to ensure full implementation of the peace accords and to promote unity. Both sides realize the people of the south must see real benefits from the peace accord if there is to be any hope of achieving unity a goal both sides support.

We have underscored to both sides the need to conclude the negotiations on an urgent basis. If the parties fail to resolve the Abyei issue during this round, much of the momentum achieved thus far will be lost. That might well lead to a rise in tensions on the ground. Aware of the critical stage of these talks at this time, we have strengthened our team of facilitators in Navaisha. I was recently in Navaisha to talk with Vice President Taha and Chairman Garang, and plan to return to push for agreement. Special Envoy Danforth remains closely involved, and Secretary Powell and National Security Adviser Rice are directly engaged in the talks. We have sent the parties a clear message on the need to move forward quickly. Should they prove unable to do so, it may become necessary as a last resort for the United States, in concert with the Troika and IGAD, to table ideas to break the impasse. In short, the parties know that the time for agreement is now, or the peace process could well unravel. The next days and weeks will prove decisive.

- If the parties reach agreement on the three areas, they will move on to the power-sharing issues. While the power-sharing issues are complex, both sides have told us that they do not expect major problems to resolve them. We intend to hold them to that.
- If the parties resolve the outstanding issues by March 16, 2004, they will take a short break and reconvene to work out details of security arrangements, international guarantees, and modalities to implement the peace accord. Once these are worked out, a comprehensive peace accord will be signed. The United States has offered to send a senior team to assist General Sumbeiywo with the security arrangements talks.

In Secretary Powell's statement to the House Appropriations Committee on March 3, 2004, he called the situation in Darfur a catastrophe. Clearly the conflict and the humanitarian crisis there are a matter of urgent and grave concern for the Administration, as they are to many in Congress. The violence and suffering in Darfur have made it one of the worst humanitarian crises in Africa. Fighting between Sudanese government forces and the rebels is continuing. Of particular concern are the activities of the largely Arab Jingaweit militias. They are systematically burning African villages, killing and abusing civilians. We have rejected the government's claim that, while it may have originally supported the Jingaweit, they are now out of its control. These militias are proxies for the government and Khartoum bears responsibility for their conduct, whether they say they have control or not.

We have spoken out forcefully on Darfur. We are pressing the Sudanese government, at the highest levels, to negotiate a humanitarian cease fire with the rebel groups so that humanitarian relief can reach all needy populations. The government of Sudan is considering a U.S. offer to facilitate such talks. At the same time, we insist that the government of Sudan take immediate steps to stop the Jingaweit militias. Meanwhile, the situation continues to deteriorate. The government of Sudan is not providing sufficient protection to all displaced persons, and the Sudanese army has not mounted systematic efforts to stop the Jingaweit. Our own sources and the press daily report new atrocities by the Jingaweit and document the fear in which the population lives, particularly those who have been displaced.

We have told the government of Sudan that this is not acceptable, and that we are taking the necessary steps to intensify actions by the international community. We are considering a range of actions at the U.N. in New York, and we will raise Darfur at the upcoming U.N. Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) session. We have also made clear that the situation in Darfur would slow the process of normalization of relations, which we have said that we would pursue were there a peace settlement between the government of Sudan and the SPLM. United States Agency for International Development Assistant Administrator Roger Winter will address the humanitarian tragedy in Darfur in more detail.

The situation in Darfur raises another important issue. Although we have made some progress with the Sudanese government, their overall human rights record remains very poor. Improvements in some practices were offset as noted in detail in our annual *Human Rights Report* by continuing abuses in others. The government continued to restrict most basic freedoms and to abuse its citizens, sometimes violently, with its security forces and allied groups of irregulars. As we described in the *International Religious Freedom* report, we remain deeply concerned about the government's restrictions on religious practice. On a positive note, there have been few, if any, slave raids over the past year. We will work to promote family reunification once a peace accord is signed.

In the United Nations and other fora we have worked hard to maintain the international spotlight on human rights violations and other serious abuses in Sudan. The United States continues to support important monitoring efforts to reduce abuses. In 2003, we provided four and a half million dollars for the Civilian Protection Monitoring Team (CPMT), established by the United States as one of Special Envoy Danforth's four tests for peace. The CPMT's objective documentation of abuses by security forces has drastically reduced such incidents in the south since monitoring began in 2002. In addition, we have provided a grant of one million dollars for the now operational Verification Monitoring Team, set up pursuant to the cessation of hostilities agreed to by the government of Sudan and SPLM in 2002. The 12-nation Joint Military Commission to monitor a cease-fire in the Nuba Mountains was established through the efforts of the Special Envoy John Danforth and supported by a seven million dollar U.S. grant last year.

We have used every opportunity to make known that any future relationship with the Sudanese government will depend on achieving a just and comprehensive peace with the south. I believe Khartoum understands clearly that observing basic rights and freedoms and an end to the conflict in Darfur will significantly improve prospects for our relations. The pace of our normalization and review of sanctions on trade and assistance following a peace agreement will be determined by Khartoum's level of effort to reform and correct human rights policies and practices.

Another of our principal goals in engaging with the Sudanese government has been cooperation in the war against terrorism. I am pleased to report to you that while we remain concerned about certain Palestinian rejectionist groups, which maintain offices in Sudan, we have continued to make progress in our counter-terrorism dialogue with Khartoum. The government of Sudan has proactively responded to some specific requests we have made to combat terrorism. In addition, Sudan has played an increasing role in working with regional governments to combat terrorism and has both signed and ratified all twelve international counter-terrorism agreements.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, there are enormous challenges ahead as we push for successful conclusion of the peace talks and continue the process of bringing Sudan into the community of democratic nations that respect human rights. We continue to enjoy the advantage of an unprecedented international engagement with the parties. The United States has provided strong support to this African-led peace process. For the Sudanese government, we have continued to make clear that normalization of our relationship will be contingent not only

on the signing of a peace agreement, but also on full implementation in good faith as well as allowing unrestricted humanitarian access to suffering populations, continuing cooperation to combat terrorism, and respect for human rights.

As I have noted here, we have made progress on all these fronts, but we will not be satisfied until these goals are fully realized. This will require much hard work and a willingness to assist in building the peace but the goal is historic change in Sudan. That process will address the legitimate grievances of the southerners who have suffered so enormously, will enhance regional stability, and will send a very positive message to the Middle East and other conflict areas. The vision of a unified, democratic Sudan that fully respects human rights would have been unthinkable until very recently. The principal responsibility to achieve and implement the peace rests with the parties themselves. But the leadership of both sides and the long-suffering people of Sudan will need our engagement and our help in rebuilding the war-ravaged south while holding out a hand of friendship to the north.